

# Last Season Of Adler's Reign

BY ROBERT COMMANDAY

**K**urt Herbert Adler has produced many mighty seasons for the San Francisco Opera but the 59th, opening this Friday, ought to be the most important to him. With his retirement taking effect at the beginning of next year, this is the finale of his distinguished 28-year reign as general director.

But, if my 17 years of observing Adler tell me anything, it is that he has probably worked no harder planning this season than any of the others. He's a performer, and as such, every single season or opera or performance has been the most important one. "The outstanding opera is the one you're busy with at the moment," he said in an interview last year. "You have to feel that way, otherwise you don't achieve."

The harvest of this might-and-main effort has been glorious opera here. For Adler personally, his unnumbered single "campaigns" have added up to an illustrious career bejeweled with distinctions. Of general directors in recent history, he's had the longest reign and the most successful in many respects — finances, innovation, company and audience development, discovery and presentation of new artists and labor peace.

For such achievements, Adler has been decorated with top honors by the major opera countries, his native Austria, Germany, England, France, Italy and the Soviet Union. He has been awarded honorary doctorates by the University of the Pacific and the University of San Francisco and is a recipient of the Berkeley Citation, the highest award granted by the chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley.

Ironically, his performer's drive — directed always toward improving, progress and the next show — doesn't allow much more than momentary satisfaction with success and honors. Nor does it permit much nostalgia or reflection about the past. Characteristically,

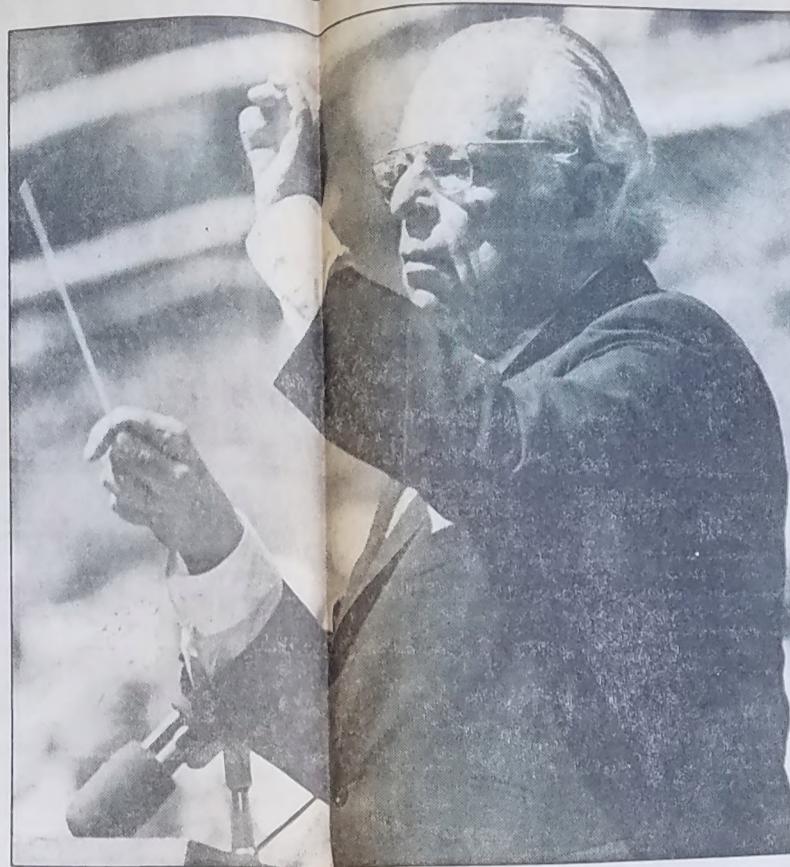
just a year ago Adler said, "I know myself whether a performance was good or bad. When I hear applause I think, 'How can I do it better?'"

Just as hard as he has driven himself, he has spurred others (the golden rule of the artistic director). Hence, the accounts of constant turnover in the company staff. In the long, outgoing parade have been those who couldn't cut it or who fell into disfavor and were fired; those who quit because they couldn't handle the pressure or the Adler style; and some who stayed, loyally and admiringly, for many years but left because of the necessities of personal growth. The pyramidal structure of the Adler regime, the decision-making centered with him, offered little sharing of responsibility and credit.

Perhaps in the improbable world of opera, the authoritarian style has been necessary. Considering the financial pressures, the art of dealing with the board, with donors, grant sources, union representatives, with temperamental, hard-to-get but essential stars (and their managers and spouses), considering the problems of always finding the money to meet growing costs and to sustain continuous company and program growth, a "nice" style might not have worked.

**A**t the 1978 gala celebrating Adler's 50 years in opera, 25 as head of the company, Lofti Mansouri related a typical Adler story. Now general director of the Canadian Opera Company, Mansouri recalled receiving a furious Adler dressing-down when a production Mansouri was stage directing displeased the boss. He promptly offered to resign, whereupon Adler came back in friendliest tones. "Don't be so sensitive!"

The public has seen mostly his public face. Writing for *California* Living in 1978, the year of the gala, Walter Blum described Adler in alternately on the phone and to an individual in his office, "wheeling, bullying, coaxing, flat-



San Francisco Opera general director Kurt Herbert Adler: more conducting in his future

tering." Enraged (presumably) one moment at a staff member, sweet as pie the next to Leontyne Price on the telephone, tough as nails an instant later while making or denying some demand, turning on the charm and warmth again for the interviewer — Adler's quick changes in temper are almost electronic. For many years, the work of directors and conductors, especially those new here or young, was vulnerable to supervision and correction during rehearsals. Adler would stalk down the aisle and give his "notes," and not privately, about tempos, balance, lighting, whatever displeased him. There were scenes. Through the cracks of the tightest security ship in the west slipped the stories of incidents, like the time an angry conductor took off for the airport with Adler in hot pursuit.

Designs of productions have been altered because of Adler's editorial insistence and not always for the better. *Die Meistersinger* is one

instance. Toward the boards of directors of the main company, of the subsidiary Spring Opera and Western Opera Theater, Adler has undoubtedly been a diplomatic leader, a figure of imposing authority. There was an exceptional slip in 1979 when he fired the manager of Western Opera Theater and hired his replacement without informing the company's board: *A row ensued.*

Always critical of the press, he overstepped badly in 1975 when he barred a critic from the house in response to her very sharp review. He was also strong enough to back down and reverse himself. As Adler himself has said, he is much tougher on the performances, a harsher critic than anyone in journalism. *One morning, a director came into Adler's office and, finding him*

*engaged in a terrible review, said, "Boss, just be glad you didn't write the review."*

In Adler's world, at his level of decision-making and necessary

gambling, a mistake generally turns out to be a big one. Most were mitigated, many averted by spectacular Adler "saves." Always reticent to spend money for "covers" (singers who understudy the principals), he has time and again found the necessary replacements, including those for artists cancelling at the last minute.

And there was Placido Domingo's wonderful explosion because Adler had called Luciano Pavarotti the "primissimo tenor," followed by Adler's smoothing the ruffled feathers and restoring the relationships to normal.

These have been 28 years of directorial virtuosity. It's only a pity such a small corner of it has been public.

Recent years have seen Adler's wonderful explosion because Adler had called Luciano Pavarotti the "primissimo tenor," followed by Adler's smoothing the ruffled feathers and restoring the relationships to normal.

The first recording he conducted, "O Holy Night," featuring Luciano Pavarotti, hit the top 40 in 1976, and subsequent Adler-conducted discs all for London Records, have done well.

This experience was most significant. Adler, the performing artist, finally could make music

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## The Adlers: Getting the Most From Their Family

BY RUTH STEIN

**S**abrina Adler, age 1, was bored by the adult conversation going on around her the other morning, even though she was the main topic. Looking for something else to do, her bright blue eyes focused on a half full cup of coffee on the table.

She went for it.

When her mother, Nancy Adler, gently took the cup from her small hand, Sabrina started to cry and sulk.

"She has a definite will," said Kurt Herbert Adler, observing this domestic scene in the living room of the family's San Francisco flat. In this will to have her own way, Sabrina is her father's daughter.

During his 28 years as head of the San Francisco Opera, Adler, who will retire at the end of the current season, has developed a reputation for being willful and temperamental.

"When I want something, I go after it. Probably this is my childlike nature," he allowed, adding with one of those sweet smiles that has charmed many an opera diva, "I know my reputation is very bad, but the people who know me well don't think I'm so awful."

Adler seems to have mellowed since becoming a father again last year at the age of 75, just a few months after becoming a grandfather for the first time.

"I adore children, and obviously I adore Sabrina," he said, combing her strands of blonde hair as she nestled between his knees. "When someone asks me how I could have a baby at my age, I always say, 'They are still made the way they used to be made regardless of age!'"

Asked if he thinks he has been easier to get along with since Sabrina was born, Adler suggested that his wife might better be able to answer. Nancy Adler, 39, who during the 16 years they have been

married has been credited with having a calming influence on Adler, in turn deflected the question to Lenore Naxon, press representative for the San Francisco Opera.

Naxon laughed and nodded yes. "When we are in the middle of a crisis at the Opera House, someone on the staff calls Mrs. Adler and asks her to please bring Sabrina over. She always brings the sunshine."

Although Mrs. Adler once expressed misgivings about their having children — both are so involved with the opera they are rarely home — the Adlers have managed to incorporate Sabrina into their hectic lives. She has accompanied them everywhere Adler has traveled on opera business, including, at eight months of age, Vienna, Munich, London and Paris.

The extra bedroom is now a combination office-nursery, with Sabrina's crib in one corner and Adler's desk in another. Her children's books are spread on the floor under shelves of books about opera.

Because of their cramped quarters, the Adlers are looking forward to moving to a big house, possibly in the Napa Valley, after his retirement. Sabrina, her father pointed out, will "grow up as a country girl."

When his other daughter and son (from a previous marriage, which ended in divorce) were growing up, Adler was so busy establishing himself with the San Francisco Opera that he missed many of the pleasures of being a father. Apparently he has decided not to let this happen again.

He awakens early so that he can spend time with Sabrina in the morning. She has a bottle of milk in bed with him, while he drinks espresso, and they "talk."

If she is awake when Adler



Kurt and Nancy Adler have made loving room in their hectic lives for their baby daughter, Sabrina

By Jerry Telfer

returns in the evening — and he is "very disappointed" when she's already asleep — Sabrina sits on a portable high chair at the dining room table while her parents eat dinner.

Sabrina has watched Adler conduct on numerous occasions and likes to keep time along with him. "When she hears music, she starts to sing and dances a little," he said. However, Adler hopes she will not grow up to be an opera singer, since he believes "most singers are unhappy people."

Nancy Adler, a thoughtful, direct woman who has perfected the look of casual elegance, manages everything to do with the household, including the family finances.

"You hear about husbands

sharing chores or making beds, but Kurt never has had the time or perhaps the inclination to do this. It is more important that he gives Sabrina his time than that he buy her diapers. I even buy his clothes for him. The only thing I can't do is go to the doctor for him," she said.

**A**lthough Mrs. Adler admits to not knowing anything about children before Sabrina was born, she apparently has adjusted to the pressures of motherhood as easily as she did to being the maestro's wife. Motherhood, she says, has been a "learning process for me, but it's a very natural thing. You do what you think is right, and hope that you seem to be the most important ingredient is that your child comes to feel love. Sabrina is a

warm, loving child, and I hope her environment has in some way contributed to this."

The Adlers have a housekeeper, who stays with Sabrina when Mrs. Adler attends openings at the opera. But she no longer spends six nights a week at the Opera House nor does she bring her husband dinner when he is busy with rehearsals well into the night as she once did.

Of course, both Adlers will be there for opening night of the season on Friday, but, although it is the last one for Adler as director of the San Francisco Opera, he doesn't consider it more special than any previous opening.

The Adlers plan to take a

cruise in January, the first real vacation he has had "since I don't even know when. I want my private life. The reason I gave up the administration of the opera was because I wanted to do the things I never had time to do before."

In February, he will conduct a production in Philadelphia directed by his son, Ronnie Adler, who is stage director of the Munich Opera. This will give Sabrina a chance to play with her niece (the Ronnie Adlers' daughter), who is six months older than she. Sometime next year, Adler also hopes to work with young artists, "which I like to do."

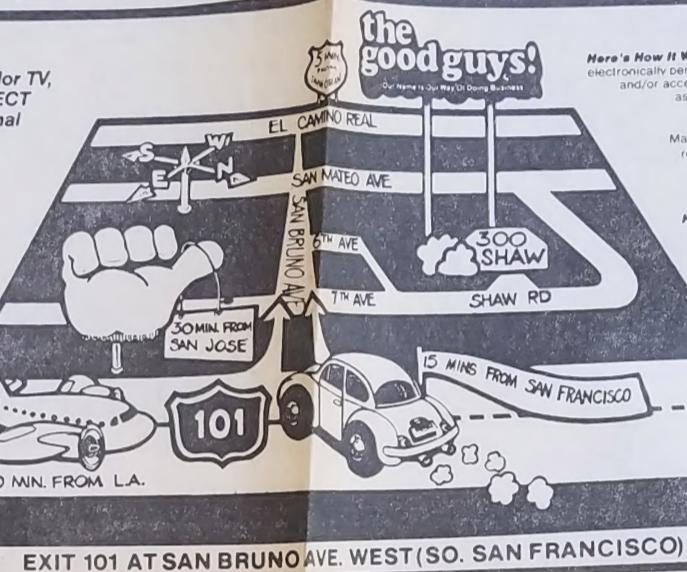
And, he added, lest there be any doubt, "I'll be around next year for the opening of the San Francisco Opera."

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## Covering the Tracks of the 'New Boarder'

**A**t twilight, Mrs. Madrigal joined her "boys" on the roof of 28 Barbary Lane.

"Well," she said, slipping between them and squeezing their waists, "her temper's as foul as ever, but her appetite's improved considerably."

"Good," said Brian. "For a while there, I was sure she was going for a hunger strike."

"Has she stopped yelling?" asked Michael.

The landlady nodded. "I think I convinced her the basement is sound-proof. She's not hollering, at any rate. We don't need to worry about the neighbors, really. Even when she's making noise, you can't hear her beyond the foyer."

Michael gazed out at the darkening bay. "It's like 'The Collector,'" he said.

"Well," replied the landlady, "she certainly has all the amenities. A comfy bed, a space heater, all my Agatha Christies. I even gave her Mona's old TV set." She turned to Michael. "What did you do with her car?"

"I parked it down on Leavenworth," said Michael, "five or six blocks away."

Brian frowned. "That doesn't ex-

actly cover our tracks."

Michael shrugged. "If you know of a swamp nearby..."

"Leavenworth is fine," said Mrs. Madrigal. "I don't expect we'll be keeping her longer than two or three days. At least, I hope not. She says she's due at the station on Monday morning, and I suspect she's telling the truth. Somebody's bound to start getting suspicious."

"Mary Ann's taking care of that," said Brian.

"How?" asked Michael.

"I think she plans to call the station and say that she and Bambi are hot on the trail of a big story..."

"Which is true," Mrs. Madrigal interjected.

"...and that they won't be back in town until midweek. The news director will be furious, she says, but he's got no reason not to believe her."

"He will when we let her go," fretted Michael.

"And then we're the kidnapers," added Mrs. Madrigal.

"But by then," Brian assured them, "public opinion will be on our side. When the twins are out of harm's way, Mary Ann can prove that their lives



would have been jeopardized by Bambi's newsmongering. Hey... I mean, it isn't like we're torturing her or holding her for ransom or anything."

"I know," deadpanned Michael. "Maybe we're not thinking big enough."

"Michael, dear..." Mrs. Madrigal remonstrated him with her eyes.

Brian addressed the landlady. "I think you're great to be doing this."

She tightened her grip on his waist. "Do we have a choice?"

"It's your house, though," said Brian. "You could get in a lot of trouble."

Mrs. Madrigal shrugged. "Mary Ann's already in a lot of trouble... and I love her... and trust her. If she says this is what must be done, then this is what must be done. We'll pull through. Don't you worry about that. Besides, this is kind of personal with me."

"How's that?" asked Michael.

"Those children... well, it's more symbolic than anything else. When I read about their disappearance in Guyana, I wept for a week..."

"You knew them?" asked Michael.

The landlady nodded.

"You mean you...?"

"We had a rather... friendly little affair just before he died. Nothing earth-shattering, but nice nonetheless."

less."

Both Brian and Michael stared at her in amazement. "I don't believe you," said Michael.

"If I'm not mistaken," continued the landlady, "one of the twins was named after me."

"That's right!" exclaimed Brian. "Mary Ann said the little girl was named Anna!"

"The little boy is Edgar," added Mrs. Madrigal. "Edgar and Anna. Sort of sweet, don't you think? Not many people can enjoy that kind of symbolism. I mean to keep on enjoying it. If I have to strangle that ridiculous creature in the basement, those children are coming home alive!"

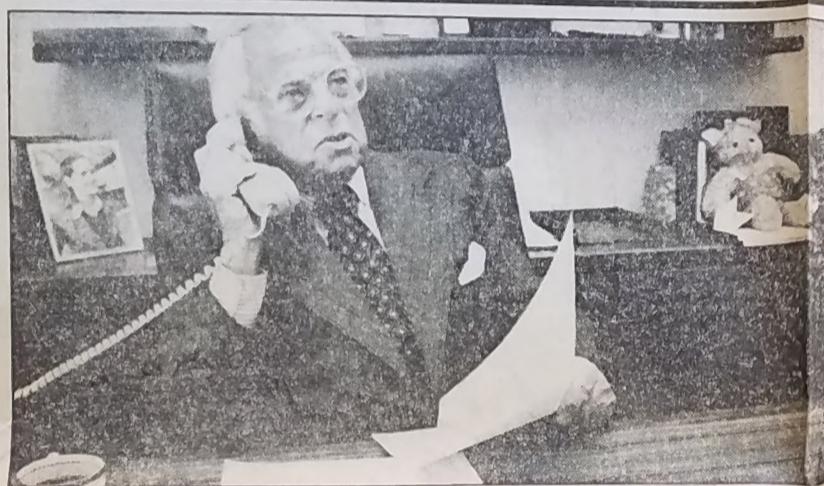
The landlady let go of her grown "children" and assumed an air of cheerful efficiency. "Well... how about some Barbara Stanwyck brownies? I made a batch for our houseguest, and there's plenty of leftovers!"

"God," said Michael, "you got her loaded?"

"I want her to be comfortable," said Mrs. Madrigal.

"This woman knows how to take prisoners," said Brian.

Tomorrow: The Diomedes



In his office, Kurt Adler works alongside a photo of his wife and one of his daughters' toys.

## Adler Ends an Era at the Opera

From Page 24

himself instead of making it possible for performances by others to happen. The result probably encouraged thoughts of retirement with the announced purpose of doing more conducting.

Will he have engagements enough to satisfy his enormous drives? There was evidence in recent years that Adler had made some reciprocal deals. There was the appearance of exchange arrangements with directors and conductors of other companies.

Then other signs came drifting over the transom. It was reliably reported last spring that Adler was denying that he had agreed to retire specifically at the end of 1981, that his tenure had longer to run. Regrets, so soon? Nothing could be changed. Successor Terry

McEwen's contract had long since been signed and sealed.

Apparently Adler had expected to run the 1982 Spring Opera (a season which McEwen canceled, presumably for one year only) and to plan the 1982 or second summer season. The reports heated up that Adler and McEwen, his own choice for successor, were getting on like cat and dog. Fur wasn't ruffled, it was flying.

The transition period, with McEwen on the premises learning and planning for his time in the sun, wasn't supposed to happen that way. McEwen had religiously avoided publicity, public statements or announcements of any kind, keeping as low a profile (administratively) as possible.

"We have different ways of attacking problems, which we've

discovered since we started working together during this period," McEwen said in one interview he didn't avoid, for the New York Times, July 5 — a joint interview with Adler. "We are talking more openly now. It's very sensitive."

Then McEwen described the painfulness of the retirement process and his desire to make that as painless as possible.

The retirement should be more than just that. It should be another great performance and glorious I can't see Adler losing in any challenge he has accepted. Nobody should want that either. By any standards, he has worked wonders here. This man I have long and admiringly regarded as an impossible man for an impossible job deserves to relish and savor the rewards of this accomplishment I hope he can.

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## Nutri/System Diet...

### A Dream Come True!

By Eileen DuRitz  
Feature Writer

Martha Average America stands 5' foot 2, 140 pounds. She plumps into her favorite easy chair every evening, potato chips andcola in her side. A magazine in her lap, she reads until the early hours of the morning and she's the unwilling victim of their "Great Escapade Campaign."

As she turns page of the latest *Vogue*, per

chance she sees a photo of her bone and cartilage sys-

tem. She is thin, slender, and high

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# La Jolla: Where the Chic Are Just Plain Folks

**THE GOOD, GOLDEN LIFE:** 92037 is a number that adds up to La Jolla, the chic waterfront zip of Southern California. And, for a San Franciscan, a New Yorker or a Beverly Hillite, whose hamburgers on Rodeo Drive go for \$9, it seems like cheap chic.

For a Parisian, a Britisher or an Italian used to paying \$200 a day for a seaside room on the Riviera or \$18 for strawberries at a three-star restaurant it's heaven — with oceanside rooms at the Sea Lodge for about \$66 per night. La Jolla is living high on the hog without hocking the whole ham. A shampoo-blow dry averages about \$12, but those in the know travel a couple of miles to Pacific Beach and get it done for \$8, luncheon for four, including drinks, averages about \$28 at the bar of La Valencia, the town's only really IN restaurant.

And you don't have to fly anywhere to shop: the village (as the locals call it) is studded with boutiques such as Ralph Lauren, Sportique, Courreges and the very popular Capriccio of Scottsdale. There are full-blown I. Magnin and Saks stores, and the Oscar de la Renta show that will be shown at the San Francisco Ballet benefit September 21 here has already played La Jolla.

This is one of the few places in the world where you can live and not have to worry about keeping up with the Joneses. As one longtime resident said, "There's no society here. Newcomers are readily accepted. There's really no club you have to belong to — no 'there' to strive for so that when you've made it, you know you've made it."

There also aren't a lot of benefits or openings to fool with, and people mainly entertain informally and easily at their homes. It's so relaxed and low-key that one prominent hostess moaned, "You don't know how difficult it is to give a party for out-of-town friends. You have to scrounge around to find interesting people. Thank God for the Jonas Salks." Desperate party givers find out who's checking out of the prestigious Scripps Clinic (also well known for its drying out sessions) to pad out a guest list.

While society might be, in many ways, non-existent, there are still the leaders — newcomer Mrs. Jack Ferris (Carolyn Rowan) and newspaper publisher Helen Copley, who gives one of the three main parties of the year; it's called The Committee and takes place in August in the garden of her home and benefits the Scripps Clinic.

The other two main events are the Jewel Ball (also a summer event) and a

## Free Events In the Bay Area

Eastbay Together will stage a free community fair from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. next Sunday at the College of Alameda. The event will feature food, square dancing and presentations on crime prevention, health, education and the environment.

The Friends of the San Francisco Public Library are sponsoring a variety of walking tours focusing on historical and architectural points of interest in the city.

Among the free tours are: City Hall, Thursdays at noon, leaves from San Francisco History Room, third floor, Main Library, 200 Larkin Street; Civic Center, 10 a.m. every Saturday, same starting point as above; Coit Tower, 11 a.m. Saturdays, tower reception desk; Historic Market Street, 2 p.m. Saturdays, southwest corner of Market and Steuart streets; North Beach, 10 a.m. Saturdays, Sts. Peter and Paul Church, 666 Filbert Street; and Pacific Heights Victorians, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., third Saturday of each month, Pleasant Park, Bush and Octavia streets.

No reservations are required.

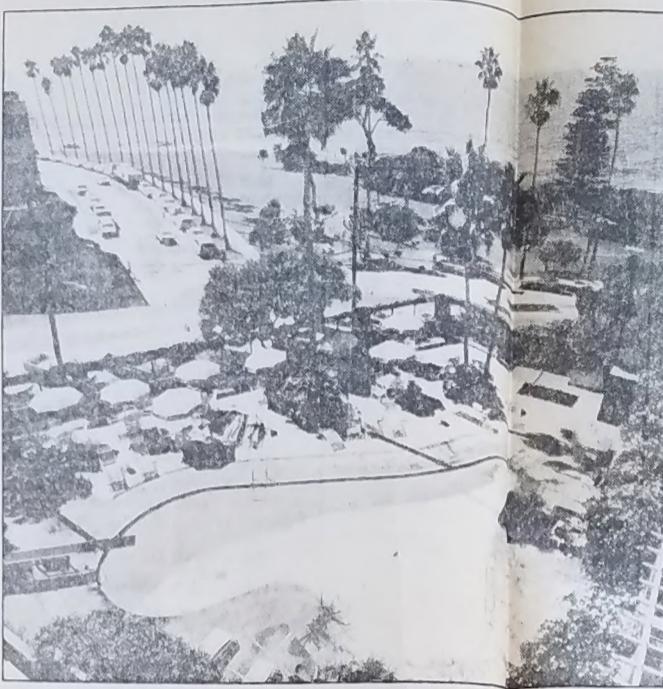
A series of free lectures designed to help older adults stay healthy will be offered at the Richmond District YMCA, 380 18th Avenue, twice a month this fall. The first program is slated for next Monday.

Topics will include healthy aging, stress and mental health, cancer warning signals, personal safety and disaster planning. The public is invited to attend.

### GUINDON



One reason polyesters are so easily captured is that they have lousy protective coloring.



Summertime or anytime, the living is easy around the pool of Hotel La Valencia, located on the main street of the village, overlooking the ocean

Monte Carlo party for the La Jolla Museum.

There is a catch to this easy lifestyle — most of the people who have chosen this sun-blessed, water-lapped, palm fringed nirvana have already made it somewhere else. So while you may not have to run to keep up with the La Jolla Joneses, you will at least have to plunk down about \$400,000 to buy into paradise and a charming white stucco bungalow with a four-car garage.

Before Ray Kroc bought his \$3.5 million home, he created McDonald's; Calvin Klein has just bought a seaside hideaway for \$1.9 million; Christina Onassis is looking. While real estate has been soft in most markets, local realtor Robert Knox Smith reported that in La Jolla \$23 million dollars' worth was sold in July.

Of course, La Jolla is just a part-time address for a lot of its residents. San Franciscans such as the Jack Vietors, the Bill Hamms and the Gordon Glubers (Patsy Fay Woods), come here to escape the summer city chill; several dozen Texans fly in to escape the heat

it's only a two-hour hop in their jets.

Business altrailed Patsy Pope, Cal Rossi, decorator Billy Gaylord and lighting designer Russell MacMasters to the area this summer. Patsy had horses racing at nearby Del Mar and entertained many of her fellow track followers such as the Jimmy Watters of Glyndon, Md., at the home she rented in La Jolla Shores.

Cal owns a condo at the exclusive Seville, which he uses as his base for checking on his Warner Hot Springs development. Billy and Russell have been semi-permanent summer residents while they put the finishing touches on the two-bedroom home they've designed, decorated and furnished (example: 12 antique Regency chairs from London for \$120,000).

There are also a dozen or so other San Franciscans that are in a holding pattern, waiting to slip into the good summer life of La Jolla. What they're waiting for, their number to come up for membership (a four-year waiting list) in the La Jolla Beach and

Tennis Club, which is not really a club but a hotel with 90 accommodations (\$40 to \$120 a day) and offering guest privileges to its members (14 tennis courts, a swimming pool, a nine-hole pitch and putt golf course, two dining rooms and cabanas on the beach).

In contrast to other clubs, this one operates without a board of directors; it's run by the family of the late W.J. Kellogg. While some members don't like the autocratic way the club is run, they are very soft-spoken about it because they love the place.

As one said, "I don't dare complain because they might take

my membership away." When a young boy roller-skated on a tennis court that one misdeed got his entire family kicked out of the club.

A team from Town & Country (abettled by local gossip columnist Burl Stiff of San Diego) currently is putting together a story on La Jolla for a spring issue.

At one photo session at Jack and Lita Vietor's home, Jack said to the photographer, "You know your magazine has done this before. Every 10 years we get discovered and the magazine does a piece on La Jolla."

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## Richard Pontzious



### A farewell to Mr. S.F. Opera

FOR 29 YEARS, the name Kurt Herbert Adler has stood for opera in San Francisco. For more than a quarter of a century, first as chorister and later as general director, as tyrant and urbane leader, Adler has worked to make opera a permanent fixture of life in The City.

Not even his detractors can argue that he has not succeeded; the evidence is weighted too heavily to the contrary. His triumphs, some perhaps scandalous at the time, far exceed his failures. Through skillful negotiation, luck and sheer willpower, he's brought the world's greatest singers, designers, directors and conductors to the Bay Area.

He has been controversial, been hated, been likened to God. But never, say those who've worked with him, has he done anything that wasn't for the company — his company.

As surely everyone must know by now, Adler, who concludes the season conducting "Carmen" this afternoon, will walk away from his director's desk for the last time 18 days from today. His successor, Terry McEwen, has invited him to return as a conductor, which he's expected to do as early as next fall to open the season with "Un Ballo in Maschera," but the maestro will no longer have control of the house — a concept which, for many, is almost inconceivable.

Adler has built San Francisco Opera around himself. He alone made the decisions that put opera on The City's streets with Brown Bag Opera, into schools around the country with Western Opera Theater and resulted in full, and sometimes empty, Opera House seats.

He has been a ubiquitous dictator, responsible for every facet of the Opera's operation, from developing seasons, signing guest artists, hiring and firing musicians and staff

administrators, overseeing rehearsals, resolving disputes among naturally hot-tempered artists working in a seething atmosphere, to approving (or not) press releases.

In his zeal to transform a regional opera company into an international house, he has won more than a score of enemies. His disputes with performers and staff members are legend. Sudden walkouts have always been a part of life at the House.

Kori Lockhart, the company's publicist, remembers storming off the job in a fit of anger directed at Adler. She stewed for years over it, she says, but like many others who've left, she went back.

"He is a perfectionist who achieves perfection from others in many ways, from being sweet, charming and sophisticated, to bullying," explains Lockhart. "But when you sum it all up, you see he's always right, no matter how he's handled it, and that can be infuriating."

"He was the man we needed for the '50s and '60s," offers Jim Keeler, author of "The Opera Companion," and a chorister and supernumerary around the Opera House in the early Adler years. "He has kept the Opera growing while every other civic service has declined."

Adler did it by surrounding himself with young administrative and vocal talent. Among the singers who credit Adler with catapulting their careers are Leontyne Price, Marilyn Horne and Leonie Rysanek.

Price remembers the moment her chance came: Adler called, said his Aida was suffering an emergency appendectomy, and asked the American soprano if she would step in.

"Thank goodness I was prepared. They rushed me into a sartor. The makeup was no problem. But you know, there was no time to rehearse. In the last scene I didn't even know where the tomb was."

Adler took a chance with Price and won.

"I highly doubt there are others in similar positions who would have taken that gamble," confides Price. "That takes a kind of accent and faith on potential."

Adler has given a hundred other opportunities to young staffers with little background. According to company planning director Margaret Norton, "Adler hires personality and a certain ability and interest. He hires the type rather than experience."

For some, it's paid off. Ruth Felt, once his administrative assistant, is now impresario for San Francisco Performances. Ann Darling and Gary Fife, also once privy to the inner office, now head opera companies of their own; she in Colorado, he in Washington, D.C. All agree that Adler has an eagle's eye for detail.

"One hears stories about great



Kurt Herbert Adler conducts as Opera general director for the final time today, but he's expected to open the fall season in the pit

industrial moguls counting paper clips, well that's how Adler was," recalls Felt, at the House from '71-'79. "He was

scrupulous down to the last penny."

"Did you ever notice that on operas running late there aren't many curtain calls? That's because Adler insists the orchestra not get up and walk out of the pit until all the bows are taken. If

the bows are going to run the orchestra into overtime, he calls a halt to everything and brings down the curtain. Many an artist has not been pleased with that."

But for all of the success stories, there are also the failures. People have come and gone fast in the Opera House. Production coordinator Matt Farruggio, who grew up in the House with Adler, knows how tough the boss has been on people.

"When he knows, in his heart, that someone doesn't have the basic talents for this business, he does not cut off their tails by inches and say, 'If you try harder it will get better.' He tells them it won't get better and you better give up. That hurts a lot of people at a very young, tender age. He would be the first one to say he's wrong, if somebody could prove him wrong, but he's very hard on people who don't

have the equipment, the desire, or the guts for this business."

"He is known for being extremely tough and occasionally difficult," says McEwen, who takes the reins Jan. 1, "but there are two sides to him. There is also a human, compassionate side."

"He is more than frequently annoyed that I haven't let him know someone was injured on stage," admits technical director John Priest. "When he hears someone is hurt, he'll go out of his way to call the fellow or mention the injury next time he sees him."

Adler has created memorable seasons in San Francisco. In 29 years, he's brought 102 new productions into the Opera House. This season alone, four of the 11 operas were S.F. Opera premieres and two were new productions.

Thirteen operas received their American premieres here during Adler's tenure. Included are "Angle of Repose" (a world premiere), "Dialogues of the Carmelites," "Katerina Ismailova," "Die Frau ohne Schatten," "The Makropulos Case" and, in June's newly instituted summer season, Arlbert Reimann's "Lear."

Typically, a season might have been

expected to include two Verdi operas, two Puccinis, one each of Mozart, Strauss and Wagner, a French opera, and a 20th century piece. The variety has been constant, with more freshness apparent in a San Francisco season than in a longer Metropolitan year.

Unlike his colleagues, who plan seasons years in advance, Adler has always waited until the last minute to sign casts. He has always hoped for a coup that would bring him something or someone special. And occasionally, he did get what company administrator Pat Mitchell calls "that something better." More often though, it was his personal clout that brought big names to San Francisco.

"His style worked better in the old days than now," offers Priest, "but he made it work right up through his last season. Because of the personal relationships that go back such a long way, he could afford to take chances, to wait for the big name to become available. But it made tremendous difficulties, trying to plan a season when we didn't know what operas we would be doing until May of the year we were going to do them."

"Adler has always thought crisis was a necessary component and that if none existed, he said, 'Well, by God, I'm the one who can create one,' and that's what he's done year after year."

Has it always worked? No. Adler can be stubborn, and when he is, things can fall apart. His strong will, for example, kept soprano Leonie Rysanek away from San Francisco for nearly a dozen years.

"We always had fights about money," recalls Rysanek with a chuckle. "I didn't come here for 10 or 13 years over \$50. I have my pride, you know, and he wouldn't pay my fee. Finally one day I called and he was so sweet."

Adler's ability to ignore the past, and welcome back former dueling partners may, in fact, be his greatest gift. Certainly it's a part of his

character treasured by Beverly Sills.

"I was one of those screaming ladies. I can't tell you which one in 'Walkure' I was a 24-year-old kid, and I remember that my helmet fell off and clattered to the ground. Adler was furious with me. But years later, when I came back as *Mrs. Prima Donna* in person, I went into my hotel room and there was my helmet — it still had Sills written on it — full of fruit and orchids."

The Opera House is full of similar stories. Love and hate for Adler sleep side by side in the folds of the gold curtain, but none who speak of Adler do so to defame him. He has inspired too many, proven himself too often.

A steady stream of tributes and good wishes from friends and company members have been crossing his desk for weeks. Visitors privileged to step backstage these days can see the loving hands staff members extend to their boss.

He tends to shrug it all off, preferring to act the hard-nosed administrator. But at a recent exchange of plaudits his voice cracked and a tear came to his eye. Weakly, he said, "If I had known it was going to be this hard to retire I would never have done it."

Adler has won many awards and been decorated by the governments of many nations, ornaments from people who know more of the achievements than the man. A more appropriate statement of his contribution, however, has been made by Leontyne Price and Beverly Sills.

Says Price affectionately, "Maestro Kurt has created the ambiance in San Francisco necessary for opera. His Opera is geared for success, for things to go well. Personally, I cannot give him enough accolades."

And Sills: "Kurt has always been known for running a tight ship, for poking his nose into everything, and it's because he did it, that San Francisco has done so well."

## Will McEwen Emulate Adler?

By JOHN ROCKWELL

**B**y common consensus, the San Francisco Opera counts as this country's second most important company, after New York's Metropolitan. It offers an extensive, two-part main season, several venturesome smaller seasons and subsidiary companies, a striking blend of the familiar and the original in casting, bold repertory and a vital, sophisticated opera audience.

But the company, which is now in the midst of its first international summer season, is facing a momentous transition. The San Francisco Opera has always been a one-man show. From 1923 until 1953 that man was its founder, Gaetano Merola. Since 1953 it has been Kurt Herbert Adler, a Viennese who joined the company in 1943.

But at the end of this year, Mr. Adler will retire. His successor will be Terry McEwen, who ran the opera-oriented London Records — the American wing of the English Decca firm — but who has never actually worked for an opera company before, in any capacity.

Aside from Mr. McEwen's inexperience, there are other grounds for

worry about the transition. The change comes at a perilous time for arts support, both in the country at large and for this company especially. For years the San Francisco Opera shared its orchestra and the Opera House itself with the San Francisco Symphony. Now, with the completion last fall of the symphony's own hall across the street, the Opera has the opportunity to expand but also the contractual necessity to do so, since it has had to organize its own, independent opera orchestra. This is an artistic opportunity, seized gleefully by the outgoing Mr. Adler in the current first summer season. But the opportunity is combined with the risk of financial over-reaching in a city with a limited population and financial resources.

In addition, there is some mystery about Mr. McEwen's actual plans. By his own design, he has lain low since his appointment was announced two years ago, avoiding interviews. Mr. Adler, too, has loathed to discuss his departure. Rumors have abounded in the rumor-happy operatic world, however. Most of those rumors have had to do with supposed tensions between Mr. McEwen and Mr. Adler, but has since been said to have had

second thoughts about retirement and about just when he was supposed to step down.

Kurt Herbert Adler was born in Vienna in 1903 and, at the age of 20, became a conductor for Max Reinhardt. He later conducted widely in Europe, served as an assistant to Arturo Toscanini at Salzburg, and came to this country in 1938. After five years with the Chicago Opera, he moved to San Francisco in 1943 as chorus master and sometime conductor, and was Merola's assistant from 1949 until Merola's death in 1953.

Under Merola, the San Francisco Opera was an honorable but provincial house, taking many of its singers from the Met and reflecting Merola's special love for the Italian repertory.

Under Mr. Adler, the company has come into its own, and is totally dominated by his authoritarian personality. "He's a real benevolent despot," Mr. McEwen said. "I mean, he's a despot, but there's a benevolent side to him. Even people who are frightened of him or intimidated by him have a kind of affection for him."

"In an opera company, someone has to stick his neck out," is the way Mr.

Continued on Page 22



Terry McEwen, left, the former record company executive who will succeed Kurt Herbert Adler, right, as head of the San Francisco Opera.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JULY 5, 1981

## A New Head for San Francisco Opera

Continued from Page 15

Adler describes his role. "I'm a very poor loser. If I get something in my mind, I want to have it done."

The company's distinctions now are several. In its longstanding international fall season, San Francisco Opera has surpassed other, comparable American companies — meaning the Met and Chicago — in the venturesomeness of its repertory and the caliber of its productions. Nearly all the great singers of the world have sung in the city, often making their American debuts as they did so. Yet all of this has been accomplished on a budget considerably smaller than the Met's. Indeed, Mr. McEwen and others have sometimes cited Mr. Adler's budgetary restrictions as a positive spur to his ingenuity:

"You don't have to be a genius to have Luciano Pavarotti sing 'Bohème,'" Mr. McEwen remarked. "You just have to have the money, and Luciano has to have the time. But if you don't have the money, you have to think up somebody else. And if you don't want to look like everybody else, you have to think up somebody original, and that's what Kurt has done."

Aside from the fall season, Mr. Adler's reckoning rests on the company's many ancillary activities. There is the venturesome Spring Opera Theater, which presents unusual operas and young American singers in a way similar to what the New York City Opera does at its most exciting. Then there is Western Opera Theater, a fine young touring ensemble. There is Brown Bag Opera, an educational, "pocket opera" offshoot. There is the summer Merola Program for young singers and a special Affiliate Artists program, to give young singers practical experience.

Now, with the new opera orchestra, a new backstage annex and an almost-completed rehearsal hall, there can be further expansion still. The summer festival season, which this year is offering five operas between June 12 and July 19, is meant to be the first step in a citywide San Francisco International Summer Festival of the Arts. And there is no real reason that the fall opera season cannot be extended and the summer season's starting date advanced to approach the ideal of true, year-round opera.

Although he is now 76 years old, Mr. Adler remains an alert, vital man; indeed, he is the proud father of a young child. And since he is known to live and breathe the San Francisco Opera, one wondered why he would ever contemplate retirement. "I am feeling very good," he replied. "I am not senile. I have lots of energy. But I had the feeling that after working so hard, I should take time for myself. I want to travel on my own, and not as part of company business. I want to read. And I want to conduct." In 1973 Mr. Adler resumed conducting after a long hiatus, and

since then has conducted several operas in San Francisco, as well as concerts and recordings, all for London Records. He will also conduct occasionally at the San Francisco Opera after McEwen takes over.

Both men agree that Mr. Adler picked Mr. McEwen on his own and imposed his choice on the San Francisco Opera board. "They believed me for many years, and on this they believed me once more," Mr. Adler said. "They wanted a line-up of guys," Mr. McEwen recalled. "But I was kind of pushed down their throats."

Terry McEwen was born in 1929 in Thunder Bay, Canada, and educated in Montreal. He joined English Decca in 1950 and spent the next decade first in Paris and then in London. He came to New York in 1959, first as manager of the classical division of London Records and subsequently as chief of the entire American operation.

Throughout his years in the record business, Mr. McEwen was an opera buff. He says that his real ambition has always been to run an opera house, and that he turned down offers from both Georg Solti at Covent Garden in London and later Mr. Adler to come to them as artistic administrator.

"In my experience, that isn't the way to become the boss of an opera house — to be promoted from within," he says. "It just doesn't seem to happen that way."

There are logical explanations for whatever tensions now exist between the two men. Retirement can be difficult, especially for so autocratic an executive as Mr. Adler, and both men recognize that.

"No transition is easy," Mr. Adler reflected, sitting in his office that overlooks a courtyard in the city's Performing Arts Center complex. "I just keep going. Obviously there are people with the thought, 'Well, he isn't going to be here soon,' and who then look in another direction. It's quite natural. I don't think about it."

"We have similar feelings about things," Mr. McEwen said in the windowless office he occupies in the house's new backstage annex. "But we have different ways of attacking problems, which we've discovered since we started working together during this period. We are closer now, in the past few months. We are talking more openly now. It's very sensitive. I love him very much; I've had two father-figures in my life, and Kurt is one of them. But I am also aware, by watching my own father and others, of how painful retirement is. No matter how much a man decides himself he is going to retire, it is still a terribly painful process. I want to make that process as painless as possible, but it's



Thomas Stewart as Lear and Chester Ludgin as Gloucester in the American premiere of Aribert Reimann's "Lear," which opened the San Francisco Opera's first summer season last month

bound to hurt."

One specific area of strain between the two came about as to when precisely Mr. Adler would step down. Mr. Adler expected to be in charge of Spring Opera and the second summer

quite clear how January was chosen," is all he will say on the subject.

Another problem is Mr. McEwen's

decision to give Spring Opera a sabbatical in 1982. Mr. Adler is particularly proud of that arm of his company. "It is my hope that Mr. McEwen will find it possible to revive Spring Opera in some form," he says. "I made a suggestion for a format to make it work in 1982, but it was postponed."

Whatever Mr. McEwen's successes and failures may be, it is clear from the outset that he plans to be as much a boss of the company as Mr. Adler was — indeed, his very ability to bear up under the strains of Mr. Adler's personality during this transition speaks well for his strength of will.

"I intend — and this is making things difficult for me with people I want to engage — to run my opera house 100 percent," Mr. McEwen says. Just how much that company will differ from Mr. Adler's remains to be seen. Right now, Mr. McEwen stresses the supposed similarities between his views and Mr. Adler's. But how he plans to run the company, compared with Mr. Adler's way, seems to reflect a centuries-old dispute about the very nature of opera — opera as musical theater or opera as costumed song.

When Mr. Adler speaks of his accomplishments, for instance, it is always repertory that he mentions first. With Mr. McEwen, singing and hence casting comes first; even Mr. Adler calls Mr. McEwen's knowledge of voices his primary attribute, and suggests he can learn the rest in time. "I am tremendously interested in voices," Mr. McEwen confirms. "For me, singing is what makes opera work."

No one disputes his expertise about voices, but his sometimes blunt opinions about singers and his favoring of his preferred singers while a record executive have made him enemies. "The singers with whom I was friendly have responded very, very positively to me coming here," he says. "But some of the singers who felt offended don't want to come. But that only applies to the singers one really needs — 12 to 20. Otherwise, you have your choice, really."

Mr. McEwen's love of singing colors his feelings about every other aspect of the company. The choice of repertory seems conditioned as much by which singers are available and what they want to sing as by his own feelings for a particular opera. It is no accident he has "postponed" Spring Opera, the most theatrically venturesome of Mr. Adler's projects. He values the other

subsidiary companies but plans to "restructure" them to make them function more efficiently as a training ground for voices. He likes contemporary opera only if it flatters the great operatic voices. He feels stage directors and, more recently, designers, have been given too much prominence, and plans to bend them to his own tastes and to impose casts.

In repertory, he speaks of a desire to expand the company's French — "I grew up in Montreal, the second largest French city in the world" — and Russian wings, although he worries that San Francisco audiences won't accept some Russian masterpieces.

As far as production style is concerned, he is determined to impose his own tastes. "We're going to do new 'Ring' for the summer season," he offers by way of example. "We'll do the first half in 1982, the rest in 1984 and the whole thing in 1985, and then bring it back every five years. My 'Ring' has to be a colorful, Romantic, beautiful 'Ring.' I want Wotan to have the biggest feathers on his hat you've ever seen. I want there to be lots of gold, lots of color. The music is full of color and the stage should be full of color, as well. I'm sick of 'Star Wars' 'Rings,' and I think the whole world is, too."

Mr. McEwen describes his overall philosophy as being that of a "slightly pink conservative." His tastes are conservative, but I am also an adventurer. That means that where Kurt would do a "Lear" — the Serial opera by Aribert Reimann that opened the summer season in June — "I would do a Rossini 'Otello.'"

Mr. McEwen's immediate problems are at least as much financial as they are artistic. The new orchestra contract and the summer season, which has hardly sold out automatically as the fall season now does, amount to a sudden upward jump in operating costs of from 60 to 70 percent. And this at a time when President Reagan's budget-cutting has passed Congress and San Francisco's moneyed elite might seem to have reached its limit in charitable contributions.

Still, both Mr. Adler and Mr. McEwen seem determinedly optimistic. "I had a hunch about Mr. McEwen, that he would be right for San Francisco, and I believe in my hunches," Mr. Adler said. "I hope he will be. I am not a person who says, 'Après moi, le déluge.' I really don't want to have worked so hard, for so many years, and then have this company go down. I hope I have put in enough of a foundation that one can continue to build."

"It's going to be difficult," Mr. McEwen says. "But if you bang ahead hard enough, you can get what you want. I believe there are ways to make it work. He made it with it [today]. All I can do is improve it, leave it alone or destroy it."

# Scene/Arts

Kurt Herbert Adler, retiring general director of the San Francisco Opera, and his wife Nancy



**T**HE OFFICE IS stark and unadorned, not what you'd expect. Too much light pours through the window, and the sirens from passing fire engines grate on your ears like off-key sopranos. There are no plants in the room, and few pictures to soften the whiteness of the walls. Sitting behind a modern desk is Kurt Herbert Adler, general director of the San Francisco Opera. The only excess in this no-frills setting is the maestro's Viennese accent.

He is dressed casually in a black turtleneck and sports coat. His hair is silver and his eyes a complimentary blue-gray. When he stands, he is not much taller than when he is sitting. It's Saturday afternoon, another working day. "I understand you wanted to do the interview at my house," he says, "but this is where I am most comfortable."

On a wall hangs a photograph of the late Robert Watt Miller, who officially appointed Adler general director in 1966, three years after the death of the Opera's founding director, maestro Gaetano Merola. Miller, who died 10 years ago, was a prominent civic, business and cultural leader who was long-time president of the San Francisco Opera.

San Francisco Examiner  
Feb. 17, 1980 Scene Page 1  
A section of the San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle

# ADLER

The maestro talks about his career with the San Francisco Opera

Text by John Stark; photographs by Katy Raddatz



Adler won't say which has been his favorite production over the years: 'The outstanding opera is the one you're busy with at the moment — you have to feel that way, otherwise you don't achieve'

board. Even today, the dapper-looking gentleman has his eyes focused directly on Adler.

Wandering in and out of the office, quietly emptying waste-baskets and dumping ashtrays, is Adler's third wife, Nancy. They have been married 15 years, and she is 36 years his junior. "I've known Nancy since she was 7 years old," Adler says. "When we got married we found a photograph of us when I was conducting a youth concert for the San Francisco Symphony. There were five children around me at the piano and she was one of them, in pigtails."

"In early July she is going to have our first baby. I haven't announced it yet, but everyone in the orchestra already knows."

Everyone also knows that Adler is abdicating his post after the fall season of 1981. "I have done administration long enough," he says. "I had the bad fortune to be thrown into administration in 1928, when I got my first engagement as an opera conductor in Kaiserslautern, Germany. The director of the opera house was not interested in administration at all. I was 23 and found myself burdened with his duties. Since then, I have somehow belonged to administration."

Adler is the last of a breed, an opera director who also conducts. Combining art with business must be an art of its own. "I don't want to talk about my qualities," he says.

"Running an opera company depends on the confidence that the board has in your ability. When I started, I had to deal with Mr. Robert Watt Miller. I was willing to take orders like a good soldier. But he knew if I found I was taking too many orders against my beliefs, I could quit. He accepted that easily. He was the brightest man, and we had few discrepancies. I wanted to introduce Alban Berg's 'Wozzeck' here in 1954. He said the theater and city were not ready, and would not consent until he felt they were. Indeed, when he consented, in 1960, we had to put on extra performances. His judgment was definitely right."

Another disagreement occurred in 1967, when Adler, conductor Leopold Ludwig and

stage director Paul Hager fought with Miller to present "Das Rheingold" without an intermission, as Wagner intended. "One night, in my office, Ludwig, Hager and I were trying to figure out how to convince Mr. Miller that an intermission would break the music. The door opened, and in walked Mr. Miller, wearing a tuxedo and formal hat. We told him we couldn't tolerate an intermission, and he finally said, 'Who am I to contradict? If you fellows think no intermission, then no intermission.' We hadn't done 'Rheingold' here in many years, and it was an incredible success. After the first performance Mr. Miller and I were walking up and down the stage. I said, 'I cannot remember 'Rheingold' being such a success anywhere.' Mr. Miller looked at me and said, 'Then imagine what a success it would have been with an intermission!'

Like "Das Rheingold," Adler's work schedule has no intermission. His administrative duties include bargaining with labor unions and singers, traveling to Europe in search of new talent and operas, balancing income and expenses, and helping secure government, corporate and private grants to fund the non-profit organization. He is responsible to four separate, though overlapping, boards: The San Francisco Opera, Spring Opera Theater, Western Opera Theater and the Merola Opera Program. He also conducts the run of at least one opera a year in San Francisco, is a guest conductor in cities, and records albums.

"I never have time," he says. "I don't sleep much. I only sleep a few hours, frequently waking up in the middle of the night to read. I read mostly about music, I regret to say. In my position I have to learn new things all the time."

What is the best advice he ever got? "You are asking me about superlatives, and I am not one to talk in them. I'll be 75 next April. How can I remember the best advice?" In all the years with San Francisco Opera, was there one opera that stands out as being the most magical? "Again you want superlatives. The outstanding opera is the one you're busy with at the moment. You have to feel that way."

otherwise, you don't achieve."

Under Adler, the San Francisco Opera has achieved an astonishing popularity. The fall season at the War Memorial Opera House has grown from five weeks to an upcoming 13½ weeks, with a month-long spring season (April 15-May 11, at the Palace of Fine Arts theater). He has instituted the annual opera auditions, open to the public; the Merola Program, which provides money and training for young singers; Western Opera, which travels around the Western states; Brown Bag and Dollar Opera, which perform in San Francisco, often on the streets; and Spring Opera Theater, which specializes in experimental productions and the nurturing of young talent.

There are also live opera radio broadcasts, the annual September opera concert at the Music Concours in Golden Gate Park (sponsored by the Friends of the Recreation and Park Department and the San Francisco Examiner), last season's worldwide satellite broadcast of "La Gioconda," and a trip to China in the works.

Gaetano Merola founded the San Francisco Opera; Kurt Herbert Adler has expanded it to its position of worldwide prominence. "Mr. Merola had an uncanny talent for assembling excellent singers. But in those days, rehearsals were very scarce. Staging and acting were not the main art. In San Francisco Opera's early days, and in the last days of Merola, there were too many different operas in a short season. The maximum any one was performed was twice. I remember one five-week season we had 17 different operas. I thought this wrong; the more you repeat a particular opera, the better the quality."

"When I took over, most singers brought their own costumes. You can imagine the discrepancies of styles and periods and clashing colors. Then there was the size of the orchestra — it was small, with not enough strings. Wagner was always performed with the most condensed orchestrations. My first step was to use the original orchestrations. I have taken out two rows of orchestra seats to



The 74-year-old maestro says, 'I never have time — I don't sleep much'

— See Page 2, Col. 1

## The maestro looks back on his career

— From Page 1

accommodate more instruments in the pit. This is a loss of income, but the board agreed that to a first-rate opera company you had to do such things. Radio, television and recordings have forced opera companies to do better.

Another problem when I started was the five-week season. For 10½ months, nothing. I felt you cannot popularize an art in such a short period. People lose interest, though some felt it was better to keep the interest small. I felt it necessary to have a spring season where we could broaden the repertoire, the audience, and develop American singers. This happened with Spring Opera Theater in 1961. I am often asked to comment on the San Francisco Opera. I wish I would be asked about opera in San Francisco.

"Our next season will be 13½ weeks, since we won't have to clear out for the Symphony, with the Performing Arts Center. However, we still cannot do more than 10 or 11 operas a season. It costs money to pay for more rehearsals. You may have to wait a few years, but we do get around to everyone's wishes. In Vienna, the opera season lasts 10 months, and many more operas are performed than here. But they do some performances with a minimum of rehearsals. If I put on an opera as badly rehearsed and prepared as some of those are, my critics would attack me more than they do now."

"We are also talking about an opera festival in the summer of 1981." A Wagnerian "Ring Cycle," perhaps? "Why not? We have done it in the fall, why not summer?"

"I am often asked if I expected opera to grow so rapidly in America. The answer is no. In Europe, there are many more operas performed. Yet the statistics I read say opera has made a bigger and faster growth in America than any art form has before. I came to the United States in 1938, and to San Francisco in 1943. During those years opera didn't grow much. Those were war years. You couldn't put on more performances for financial reasons, and because international artists couldn't perform here. In 1956, after running the San Francisco Opera for three years, the board found it practical to make me general director. We started to grow very soon afterwards."

**H**AS OPERA CHANGED much since Adler was a young man? "In German opera houses X number of singers were engaged for a season, which could be almost the entire year. They were not engaged for individual operas. I don't think that is possible anymore, even though my colleagues talk about the San Francisco Opera becoming an ensemble company. Most big stars will not sing in one theater for a whole season. Now singers usually study certain roles and sing those roles wherever they can; not the young singers, but ones who have arrived. In the late 1920s, when I began, there was no flying of importance. It took time to get places. It wasn't easy to get a leave of absence and travel from one company to another."

"I don't think you can say if singers were better then. Nowadays, more attention is given to acting. In most theaters, operas are now performed in their original language, not the language of the country. I can still remember the German text of 'Carmen' and 'Butterfly'."

It's no secret that Adler has a reputation for getting his own way: "Look, one has to believe in what one is doing. If you don't believe, don't fight for it and don't try to convince others to follow you."

A few years back, a newspaper critic who panned too many operas found her press ticket revoked. "Being a critic is very dangerous profession. Naturally critics will react personally. A review can depend on if they came to the theater in good or bad company, if they like the director or whatnot. We now have a local critic who says, 'When I write this today, the next performance may be different.' That's true. Performers are not machines. Critics are only

dangerous if the public that reads them is naive, and doesn't realize that the critic may be right for the moment. Criticism has to be as flexible as music. Toscanini made that remark to me when I was his assistant at the Salzburg Festival in 1936. He said music must be elastic like water. But clean water."

Some opera lovers, no matter how brilliantly an opera is conducted, will boo. "I know myself whether a performance was good or bad. When I hear applause, I think, how can I do it better? I learned that from Toscanini, too. When he bowed he always made a terribly fierce face. I asked him, 'Why do you look so sour when the audience is jubilant?' He said, 'I'm thinking what I have to do to improve.' I have a friend here who boos me everytime. I don't know him, but I call him my friend because he so enjoys boozing me. I know his voice. I wave at him."

An only child, Adler was born early in this century into the Viennese upper-bourgeoisie. "My parents were very well off, but raised me as if I had no money. My father was in textiles, and owned factories." Young Kurt attended the Music Historical Institute in Vienna, the Vienna State



Examiner/Katy Raddatz

Kurt Herbert Adler, left, with the Opera's chief electrician, Jack Philpot: 'I know myself whether a performance was good or bad'

Academy of Music, the Vienna Conservatory of Music and the University of Vienna. From 1925 to 1928 he served an apprenticeship with the legendary stage director Max Reinhardt in his Vienna theaters. Following that, he conducted at various opera houses in Germany and Italy, and was conductor of the Volksoper (the People's Opera) in Vienna, 1934-36. He also conducted in opera houses and on radio in Czechoslovakia, 1936-38.

Adler came to the United States on the eve of World War II, working first for the Chicago Civic Opera. From 1943 until he moved here full-time in 1949, he also worked during the San Francisco Opera's five-week season as chorus master. Once here, he became a local musical fixture.

The Adlers live "in Pacific Low, near Pacific Heights," the maestro says. He and his second wife Diana had two children, a daughter Kristin, who is married to ex-49er Charlie Krueger ("He taught me to enjoy football, and I watched the Superbowl"), and a son Ronald, who is a stage director at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich. A few weeks ago Ronald made Adler a grandfather. "This means my grandfather is going to have a younger aunt or uncle," Adler says. "I love children and animals, and they take to me."

Adler's only non-musical pastime is driving. He now has a Mercedes, but in years past he had a sporty Thunderbird, which brought him hundreds of dollars worth of speeding tickets. "Driving is my way of relaxing."

Over the years, Adler has worked with or known immortals of music:

Composer Richard Strauss: "During the days when I studied in Vienna he was co-director of the opera. I met privately with him in the houses of friends, and had a continued visa to enter rehearsals at the opera house. He was a very shrewd man. An excellent businessman and man of quiet, strong will. Except that his wife sometimes had a stronger will than he did. He had a very personal conducting technique. He sometimes said others conducted his works better than he did. It wasn't always true. His conducting of 'Elektra' was absolutely unforgettable. But his co-director, Franz Schalk, conducted 'Der Rosenkavalier' more effectively. Schalk was warmer and Strauss colder."

Max Reinhardt: "I remember a night rehearsal when I was 20 years old. I said, 'Professor Reinhardt, that is impossible.' He crossed his arms and said, 'Young man, remember, in the theater nothing is impossible.' I agree. I am not one who gives up, either... Reinhardt had absolutely no sense of time. It didn't matter if a performance was two hours away. He rehearsed as if it were a week away. One time he let an audience stand in the rain from 8 to 9 p.m. Even though it was an 8 o'clock curtain, he was still rehearsing."

Conductor Arturo Toscanini: "I remember rehearsals for apprentices. He showed them how to jump, dance, smile, love, do everything. He was so strong and believed so much in what he did."

Maria Callas: "I engaged her to come here in 1957... We came to an agreement, then she broke her contract. She said she was sick. I don't know how sick she was. I called her at home in Milan and the operator said, 'She cannot talk, as she's rehearsing at La Scala.' I was forced by circumstances to request of the board to bring charges against her with the American Guild of Musical Artists. They indeed reprimanded her and said if she broke a contract once more she wouldn't be able to perform in America."

"We later met again and were on friendly terms. She intended to make her comeback in San Francisco in 'La Traviata' in 1966. She cancelled, and said she couldn't perform in it. I suggested her comeback be 'La Voix Humaine' by Poulenc. She would have been perfect. She had this crazy idea. She said, 'Kurt, I've told you often I don't sing contemporary music.' I said, 'Maria, you don't know the score if you say this, because it is not contemporary music. There is a lot of melody and phrases that can be spoken.'

Jean-Pierre Ponnelle: "He is a man of enormous fantasy. He sometimes does things that don't please everybody, but it is always very interesting and personalized. I think that's what artists should do. We don't have to agree all the time

with what we hear and see. Ponnelle is a much criticized man, yet without doubt one of the greatest directors alive."

Leontyne Price: "We have been friends ever since she made her major opera debut here in 1957 in the American premiere of Poulenc's 'Dialogues of the Carmelites'... When we did 'La Forza del Destino' here last season, which I conducted, she and I agreed that some performances were highlights of musical contact. There were moments when everything worked out, though this didn't happen in all the performances."

Last season Adler found himself in operatic hot water when he called Luciano Pavarotti the world's primissimo tenor. Spanish tenor Plácido Domingo, who was set to star in "La Fanciulla Del West," almost rode off into the sunset. Would he ever make such a superlative statement again?

"I'm sorry, I might. I tell you why. I adore Pavarotti, and I adore Domingo. I explained to Domingo after he read what I said that I was partisan to Pavarotti. But I am also partisan to Domingo... But don't bring it up again. We are all trying to bury this damn thing. I went on vacation with Domingo, never Pavarotti. That was a monstrous situation."

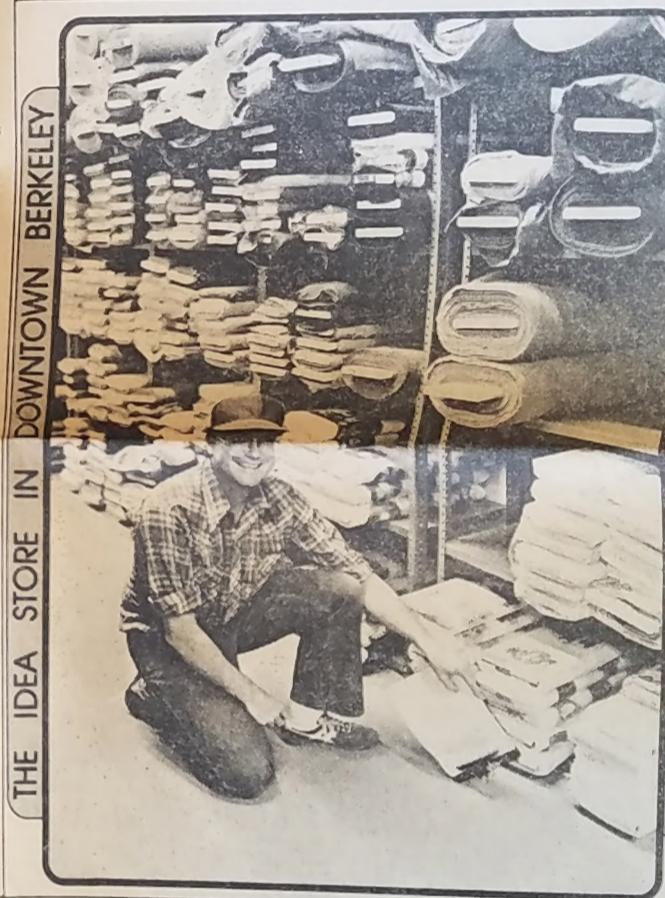
Despite all the great and famous people Adler has encountered, he says he's never been intimidated by anyone. "I rarely have problems talking to people and audiences. I

am not shy in this respect."

"However, at the invitation of the Philippine government, the Opera went to Manila to perform. As a special gift we put on a free outdoor concert on Christmas day. After I conducted selections from 'Forza,' Mrs. Marcos spoke. Then it was my turn to address the crowd, which was estimated to be one million strong. As I started to talk, I felt a certain hesitation which I didn't know I had. After my talk, I conducted Handel's 'Messiah.' As I began the 'Hallelujah Chorus,' fireworks went off. I never expected to conduct the 'Messiah' with fireworks. It was beautiful, and smelly."

Will Adler conduct after his retirement? "Yes, if I'm engaged. If not, I hope the board will give me a pension large enough for my pleasure and education. It's high time I got an education in something other than music."

One last question ("I hope it isn't a superlative," he says): What advice would he give his successor, Terry McEwen of London Records? "Each opera director must find his own role. He must find who he is and what is the theater he's supposed to run. He must then model himself in accordance with this double situation. Bruno Walter, the late conductor, was a friend of mine. He once said to me, 'Kurt, you don't have a job, you have a mission.' I think what the word mission means. I think it fits. It has been a mission, I dare say."



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# Music/

"I know English better than all of 'em." (Kurt Adler)

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## The Charming Despot Behind the San Francisco Opera

By DAVID LITTLEJOHN

**SAN FRANCISCO** The new season of the San Francisco Opera opened earlier this month with two of the biggest names in the world of opera—Joan Sutherland and Luciano Pavarotti—singing "Il Trovatore." It was the first time the two had ever sung the opera together. Next month will find the renowned Soviet cellist Mstislav Rostropovich in the Bay City conducting his first opera in America (his second anywhere)—Tchaikovsky's "Queen of Spades" in Russian with his wife Galina Vishnevskaya in the lead. There will also be a *Günther Rennert-Raymond Leppard* "L'Incoronazione di Poppea" and two ingenious new productions by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. It is owing to such coups that the San Francisco Opera has won a reputation as second only to the Met in this country. And everyone agrees that the credit for that accomplishment goes to the rotund, energetic, irascible 70-year-old Viennese dictator, named Kurt Herbert Adler, who has been the company's General Director for 22 years.

During the season, Adler spends 14 hours a day, 6 days a week in San Francisco's War Memorial Opera house—still elegant if inadequate after 43 years, and very much "his" house. While a scowling bronze bust of the Generaldirektor scrutinizes the Grand Foyer, the man himself watches all first nights from his armchair in Box A, and listens to all subsequent performances over an intercom in his fourth-floor office ("Please Do Not Enter Unannounced") where he works nightly until after 11 p.m.

He auditions performers, hustles money and monitors quality for his several offspring—the Opera's international fall season (which will end in late November with Maestro Adler himself).

David Littlejohn is Associate Dean of the Journalism School at the University of California at Berkeley.



Adler: "Obergruppenfuhrer complex?"

conducting eight performances in 12 days); the Spring Opera Theater (which last April offered the first American-made production of Britten's "Death in Venice"); the Western Opera Theater, a popular touring group for singers in training ("my little ones, my babies"); and Brown Bag Opera, which offers luncheon concerts and one-actors downtown.

Why does he work so hard? "Oh, I don't know. Just my personality, I guess."

Perhaps a personality like Adler's, at once tough, charming and indefatigable, is essential these days to keep an American opera company afloat. One can detect similar traits in Carol Fox of Chicago, Sarah Caldwell of Boston, John Crosby of Santa Fe. In contrast, the absence of an omnipotent ruler at the Met for more than three years now may help to explain the floundering state of the nation's premier opera company.

Everyone who knows Kurt Adler speaks of his "charm"—and it can be dazzling to observe: Adler fencing with San Francisco Mayor Joseph Alioto, who subscribes to two seats in Box H; Adler playing pool to an electrical contractor; Adler signing a personal copy of the latest Annual Report to a generous donor "with devotion, admiration . . . und luff"; Adler on the telephone to a local merchant prince and patron of the arts: "The Emperor and Empress of Japan? Yes, Cyril, yes, I will find a couple of big singers for the banquet." Adler cajoling superstar out of their head-colds or into benefit concerts in an extraordinary mixture of French/German/Italian and American slang: "Ah, M. Tappy: Comment ça va aujourd'hui? Okay, ja? L'air n'est pas fraîche; il y a du Smog . . . " "Luciano, caro, come sta? Bene? Listen to me, sweetheart, what are you doing with such young girls? You're worse than I am. Be careful, ja? Attenzione alla legge. Allora, ciao, grazie."

Local critics find themselves telephoned at home and hugged during intermissions—yet privately Adler says he has little respect for them. "Oh, Martin, maybe [Martin Bernheimer of The Los Angeles Times] He knows a lot."

The charm is clearly strategic, an instrument to be used as needed, and he has used it to especially good effect on unions and boards of directors: "The union business agents and I, we have all been here so long we know each other now. There is, how you say, mutual respect and understanding. Did you know I am a member myself of the Musicians' Union local? That the Stagehands and Electricians have made me an honorary member? That must mean something, eh? Here in San Francisco union people say, 'Kurt Adler knows the operation so thoroughly it is easier to talk to him than to lawyers.'

As for the Opera's Board of Directors, that other bane of an administrator's existence: "Them? Ha! I tell them what to do. All they do is raise money. Do you think I could keep this job 22 years if I let anyone give me orders?" Later, he amends that boast a bit: "They never interfere artistically, I mean. And financially, they trust me. By now I know what the traffic will bear." After his first full year in charge of the San Francisco Opera, in 1954, Adler admitted to the board that he had made mistakes: "But you know what? I told them: 'I will make more.'"

Largely by force of personality, Kurt Adler has been

able to obtain civic and union concessions, subsidized productions, the services of international stars, and good publicity. The backstage workaday face of the General Director, however, is not noticeably charming: it wears a perpetual snarl of dissatisfaction. Blue eyes narrowed behind silver-rimmed glasses, Adler sits behind an L-shaped desk (covered, for some reason, with small stuffed animals, rewriting everyone else's copy ("I know English better than all of 'em!")); redesigning typefaces; reseating musicians; regaling employees with their errors and incompetence; scrutinizing guest lists; choosing a color for the opening-night floral decorations that won't clash with the color of the seats. As one critic has put it, the man seems possessed by an "Obergruppenfuhrer complex."

If one is to work very long for Mr. Adler—and to everyone in the house he is Mister Adler—it is necessary either to play Yes Man or to bite one's tongue often. His demands are extreme (the underpaid staff is expected to keep his hours); his ego is easily bruised; his control is total and meticulous; his inability to delegate authority is deep-rooted. ("But this new staff of yours, Mr. Adler, don't they make your work any easier?") "Ach, they're not. Help! I still have to do all the work!"

Adler's public outbursts can be flatly insulting. More than one first-rate associate has quit—although sometimes they come back. In the end, the company is good enough to inspire loyalty. And life at the opera, even on Kurt Adler's terms, seems to be too exciting to do without. "The price I pay not to be bored!" sighs one staff member in the line of fire.

Long before now, Adler could have moved "up" to posts in Munich or at the Met. But where else than in San Francisco could he keep total personal control of an international opera company, find so docile a board, so sympathetic a mayor, renew his own lavish energies by conducting when he chooses, perhaps the maestro might begin to take it easy when he reaches 90? He responds curtly, "Maybe a hundred." Retirement is not a welcome topic to Kurt Adler.

creating new productions, even new companies each year? "If I changed, moved, it would be easy. I could do over what I've done before. Here I have to keep doing new things."

Season after season, Adler has been able to entice back to this city of 700,000 some of the most interesting singer-actors and opera producers in the world. This year, for example, Ingvar Wixell, a fine Swedish baritone who acts as well as he sings, is back for his sixth season (as Belcore in "The Elixir of Love," as Simon Boccanegra, and as Di Luna in "Il Trovatore"). "I love this city," he says. "It is concentrated, not too big, very European. And then one can meet all one's important international opera colleagues; Adler can get them. Yes, I respect Adler very much. He gave me my start in the U.S., you know, trusted me. He's a very great man."

Kurt Adler's decentralized, populist programs are the sort of things foundations and the National Endowment adore. If they occasionally make only mediocre music, they make great politics and publicity, and are sure to grow bigger. Adler is currently fighting for more space, a second auditorium, lower rentals, longer seasons, two Western Opera Theater companies and a major Summer Festival. Recession or no, he'll probably get them all. "This city is screwy," shrugs a city official. "Why, more people here go to the opera than to the Giants."

There seems to be only one big problem in the San Francisco Opera's future. Maestro Adler may have the constitution of a tank and the strength of a bull moose, but even opera administrators don't last forever. After so many years of keeping total control of every aspect of the company in his own tight fists, what will happen when he finally relaxes a bit? One puts the question tentatively: perhaps the maestro might begin to take it easy when he reaches 90? He responds curtly, "Maybe a hundred." Retirement is not a welcome topic to Kurt Adler.

Handel came to London, operas often were bilingual, with some artists singing in English, others in Italian. That went on for a few years. "At length the audience grew tired of understanding half the opera; and therefore to ease themselves entirely of the fatigue of thinking have so ordered it at present, that the whole opera is performed in one language. We no longer understand the language of our own stage . . ."

Other things bothered Addison. He did not like the recitatives, which he thought unnatural and anti-drama. He did not like the stilted plot of operas like "Rinaldo." On those occasions where recitatives were translated, he did not like the quality of the translations, which to him ran counter to the normal English accentuation and in addition often failed to make sense. (Even proponents of opera in English today often have harsh words to say about the quality of translations.) But most of all he came back to the argument of unintelligibility. A work for the stage made no sense unless it could be understood.

And these arguments continue to be heard; they are soberly trotted out by those today who believe that opera cannot catch hold until it is presented in the vernacular.

But if Addison's thesis had any validity in 1711, that does not necessarily mean it has validity in 1975. For every argument in favor of translated opera, there is a good counter-argument. Take the subject of unintelligibility versus intelligibility. Many opera singers, unlike singers for the Broadway stage, make hash out of any language but their own (and, as often as not, they cannot be understood when they are singing in their own language). Regrettable, but a fact of nature. Or take the subject of the sheer loss in musical value when an opera is translated. A composer has certain language sounds in his ear that defy transportation. When the curtain goes up on Mozart's "Nozze di Figaro," the first word is "Cinque." How can that liquid sound be translated into English without a loss in musical value?

The argument that many composers, notably Verdi, were anxious to have their operas translated into the language of the country that was producing them, has never been very impressive. In the 19th century (and well into the 20th) most European opera houses translated operas into their own language. (Soviet bloc countries still do.) A composer of operas, anxious to get his works produced, would naturally go along with the custom, and in the process interest himself in getting the best possible translation. That is basic self-preservation. When in Rome. But anybody who has heard "Otello" in French (it sounds like *Massenet*) or "Madama Butterfly" in Bulgarian (which this writer did at an unforgettable evening in Sofia), or "Rigoletto" in Russian knows that the music is actually altered.

The solution? Easy. In any American opera house, librettos are readily available. Read the libretto carefully before a performance, and all problems will be taken care of. Is that asking too much? Or, if you have the money, get a recording of the opera (which always has a libretto) and prepare yourself. Translated opera really loses more than it gains. Even comic operas, such as the recent "Daughter of the Regiment" that the New York City Opera staged, lose quality in translation. This writer enjoyed it as much as anybody else, but what it really ends up as is *Opera For the Tired Businessman*.

## LETTERS

### Recorded Prose, Pit Manners And Prompters

To the Editor:

While I am not unmindful of the kind words John S. Wilson has sent in my direction in his review of "A Chorus Line," (Musicals to Be Seen, Not Heard, Aug. 31), I wonder if I may comment on one serious point brought up in that review.

Mr. Wilson says: "Mr. Lieberberg has managed to do a remarkable thing: He has left out the high point of the show . . ." He is referring to the touching monologue without music of Sammy Williams in which he details the painful experiences of a homosexual in a drag show, a scene which Mr. Wilson very aptly describes as a "soul-strip." As one might guess, leaving this (and many other parts of the show) out of the recording was not an oversight or the result of a careless decision. What we are dealing with here (and this is something that I think Mr. Wilson has not taken into consideration) is the nature of the phonograph record, which, if it is to be successful—as a record, not in sales necessarily—is something to be played over and over again. It has been my experience that, excepting Shakespeare and poetry, and perhaps even there, only music lends itself to this kind of repetition, while the spoken word does not and is usually recorded for education rather than entertainment, or for a "record" in the true sense of the word.

Kurt Adler's decentralized, populist programs are the sort of things foundations and the National Endowment adore. If they occasionally make only mediocre music, they make great politics and publicity, and are sure to grow bigger. Adler is currently fighting for more space, a second auditorium, lower rentals, longer seasons, two Western Opera Theater companies and a major Summer Festival. Recession or no, he'll probably get them all. "This city is screwy," shrugs a city official. "Why, more people here go to the opera than to the Giants."

There seems to be only one big problem in the San Francisco Opera's future. Maestro Adler may have the constitution of a tank and the strength of a bull moose, but even opera administrators don't last forever. After so many years of keeping total control of every aspect of the company in his own tight fists, what will happen when he finally relaxes a bit? One puts the question tentatively: perhaps the maestro might begin to take it easy when he reaches 90? He responds curtly, "Maybe a hundred." Retirement is not a welcome topic to Kurt Adler.

Long before now, Adler could have moved "up" to posts in Munich or at the Met. But where else than in San Francisco could he keep total personal control of an international opera company, find so docile a board, so sympathetic a mayor, renew his own lavish energies by conducting when he chooses, perhaps the maestro might begin to take it easy when he reaches 90? He responds curtly, "Maybe a hundred." Retirement is not a welcome topic to Kurt Adler.

What is poignant and moving in the theater to Mr. Wilson (and to me as well), when removed from that context and put down on a record and played over and over, deteriorates in its emotional appeal and can even become an embarrassment. I did, indeed, regret not being able to include more of the music on the record, but here we have the dilemma of time limitation; one cannot make a record and a half. In addition, I do not agree with the assessment of the Marvin Hamlisch score.

And finally, a gerontological note: While I have retired as an executive of a recording company, I still hope to be able to totter to a studio from time to time, particularly if a show or anything else as fascinating as "A Chorus Line" comes along.

GODDARD LIEBERBERG  
New York City

The Bolshoi Shuffle

To the Editor:

A recent Sunday article by Donal Henahan ("Opera Instrumentalists Should Be Heard and Not Seen," Aug. 24) quotes a Brooklyn correspondent who heard recent Bolshoi Opera performances at the Met from a seat in the grand tier. My seats for all six operas presented by the Bolshoi were in the balcony or family circle, two tiers higher and cheaper, which gave me a much better view of the pit, and I might add, the best sound in the house. Mr. Henahan's informant "was impressed by the lack of shuffling back and forth" by the Russians as contrasted to the Met's musicians.

From my vantage, I noted members of the Bolshoi's percussion section coming and going, as well as the French horns and trombones. The timpanist stayed but took cat-naps. That was on the right side of the pit. Over on the left, the splendid pianist and the harpists, all three of them women, also disappeared when they weren't needed (I'm still wondering about the function of a kibitzer, also in full evening dress, who sat behind the three bassoons throughout one entire performance.) Thus, my testimony, refuting that reported by Mr. Henahan, is that the Bolshoi players are granted the same commuting privileges enjoyed by the home orchestra, and by their colleagues in every European opera house I have visited.

I have not yet read any comment by other orchestra-watchers on the unusual geography of the Bolshoi's seating in the pit. Double basses, ranging from center to right, with their backs to the stage. (Eight bull-fiddles were em-

To the Editor:

Richard M. Braun's recent article about prompters ("An Operatic Performance Is Always One Beat Away From Chaos," Aug. 31) never mentioned the fact that one of our leading companies, the City Opera, never but never uses a prompter since all its singers are trained to master their roles and to rely entirely on the conductor for the entrance cues and the beat. They are so self-confident and so immersed in their roles that they would find a prompter an obstruction to a good performance.

At a recent rehearsal at the Metropolitan Opera, a noted singer trained at the City Opera was so annoyed and distracted by the constant cueing of the prompter that in sheer exasperation, she was impelled to shout at him to "Please be quiet!" (Eyewitness report.)

It seems to me that rather than opening your columns to a article in praise of prompters, we should be hearing a critical voice calling for the abolition of the prompter and his obnoxious box.

ELIAS M. SCHWARZBART  
New York City

## MUSIC VIEW

HAROLD C. SCHONBERG

### Opera in English? No, Thanks



THE hoary subject of opera in English is never far from us, and this column has dwelt upon it from time to time. It is a subject that goes back to Addison and Steele in 1711, something that had slipped my mind until the announcement of the Houston Grand Opera's staging of Handel's "Rinaldo." On Oct. 16, Marilyn Horne will be starring in "Rinaldo," which will of course be sung in the original Italian. But it was that opera which brought forth the polemics of Addison and Steele's "Spectator" papers. Both of those writers were very much pro-opera-in-English, and they may have been the very first to raise the issue.

"Rinaldo" was Handel's first opera for an English audience. It had its premiere at the Haymarket Theater on Feb. 24, 1711. An impresario named John Jacob Heidgger ("the most ugly man that ever was formed") cannily realized that Handel was the coming man, and was instrumental in getting him to write an opera. Handel is supposed to have composed "Rinaldo" in two weeks. Advertisements named the composer: Georgio Frederico Handel. With the huge success of "Rinaldo," which ran for 15 nights to full houses, Handel's fame was established, and it was not considered necessary thereafter to Italianize his name. For the next 20 years or so, opera in England meant Italian opera in general and Handelian Italian opera in particular.

It did not take Joseph Addison long to swing into action. Less than two weeks after the premiere of "Rinaldo," Addison was attacking. Perhaps his response to the opera was something less than purely philosophical or disinterested. Four years previously, he and a minor composer named Thomas Clayton had collaborated in an opera named "Rosamond," and it turned out to be a total failure. Addison's hopes for native English opera were dashed. Thus the success of "Rinaldo," which ran counter to everything he believed in, was a torn in his side that made him howl most unmusically.

He poked fun at "Rinaldo." He tore it to pieces. He analyzed the libretto and became jaded over its absurdities. One section of the opera especially took his fancy. In Act I, scene 6, the libretto calls for "A delightful Grove in which the Birds are heard to sing, and seen flying up and down among the Trees." The producers of "Rinaldo" actually released sparrows and chaffinches, many of them, into the theater. Addison came back to this several times, with not very original remarks about our feathered friends and danger to the heads of the people in the audience.

But many of his more philosophical observations made sense, and are still raised by adherents of opera in English. One of his main points was, naturally enough, the matter of intelligibility. "Our great grandchildren," he wrote with fine sarcasm, "will be very curious to know the reason why their fore-fathers used to sit together like an audience of foreigners in their own country, and to hear whole plays acted before them in a tongue which they did not understand." He pointed out that before

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Continued from Page 15

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**NEIL WOLFE**—Piano. With Richard St. Man. Tues.-Sat.

### Folk/Pop/Rock

In Concert

**PAUL ANKA**—With Odile Coates. A prime instance of the commerce of the end-of-the-year. Palace Theater, 1344 Broadway, Tues.-Wed. Sun., 8.

**SURVIVAL BASSETT**—The popular singer from New Zealand, who appealed to the might-of-the-road market for 20 years. Carnegie Hall, Today, 7 and 11.

**ROBERT FLACK**, RICHARD PRIOR, CHILDO HAMILTON—The queen of adult pop, along with the funniest of present-day black comedians and a black belladonna, Fall From Grace, 1344 Broadway, Tues.-Sat., 7 and 11.

**L. D. FRAZIER**—Folk concert. Middle Earth Coffeehouse, 2 W. 44th St., Ed. 10th St., Thurs.-Sat.

**EMIL GROVETZ**—Russia's popular singer. Town Hall, Today, 5.

**PAT LAMANNA**—Folksinger/songwriter. Sign, 2506 Jerome Ave., 44th St., Tues.-Sat.

**LUIS NEVES**—A young Peruvian musician who knows his North American

music. Folk, Patch's Inn, 314 E. 70th St., Wed. and Sat.

**GRAHAM STEWART & HIS GAS HOUSE GANG**—Lively, New Orleans-flavored jazz from Graham Stewart, an ensemble of seven from drummer Freddie Moore and others. 20th St. Bar, 420 St. Sat., 9.

**MICKEY ORBISON CALYPSO BAND**—Signs of Amnesia, 10th St., Thurs.-Sat.

**ROCK AND ROLL SPECTACULAR**—With Chuck Berry, Janis Joplin, the Animals, Bob Dylan, others. Another of Richard Maltby's slickly produced oddities, calculated to bring in Chuck Berry, can't all be bad. Madison Square Garden, Fri., 8.

**CLARK TERRY**—Trumpet. Eddy Condon's, 145 W. 54th St., Thurs.-Sat.

**NANCY WILSON**—And THE MAIN SEASIDE BAND—singer and the original Captain Main Seaside, a group that includes Billie Jo, Billie Jo and Taff Jordan, trumpet. West End Cafe, 24th and 14th Sts., Wed.

**JOE WILLIAMS SWING FOUR**—Former Ellington musician Frank Williams; Eddie Harris, piano; Eddie Harris, electric guitar), who played with Basie, Ray Charles, piano, and Shelly Manne, drums. West End Cafe, Away and 14th Sts., Mon.-Sat.

**ROBERT MORRIS**—Unit—Steps of Madison Borough Hall, 109 Jerome St., 12th and 13th Sts., Tues.-Sat., 12:30, Free.

**CLIVE TENOR**—Singer—The Little Room, 417 E. 54th St., Mon.-Sat., 7 and 10.

**CEDAR WALKTON TRIO**—With Sam Jones and Billie Jo, bass; Taff Jordan, Taff Jordan, trumpet. West End Cafe, 24th and 14th Sts., Wed.

**THE WARREN COURT**—Earl Warren, the main saxophonist and singer in the original Captain Main Seaside, a group that includes Billie Jo, Billie Jo and Taff Jordan, trumpet. West End Cafe, 24th and 14th Sts., Wed.

**JOE WILLIAMS AND BUDDY RICH**—And his band—Williams has become a brash bandleader since he left his blues home with Count Basie; Buddy Rich is still leading his late-night band. Joe's Place, 133 W. 33rd St., nightie, except Sun.

**FRANC WILLIAMS SWING FOUR**—Former Ellington musician Frank Williams; Eddie Harris, piano; Eddie Harris, electric guitar), who played with Basie, Ray Charles, piano, and Shelly Manne, drums. West End Cafe, Away and 14th Sts., Mon.-Sat.

**ARTOOSH**—And Maria Stefanoff, Middle Eastern singer. Garibaldi, 23 W. 8th St., Mon.-Sat.

**BROOK BENTON**—Singer. Rainbow Grill, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, N.Y.C., except Mon.

**MARTY BERNIS**—Piano. Assembly, 14 W. 51st St., Mon.-Fri., 4.

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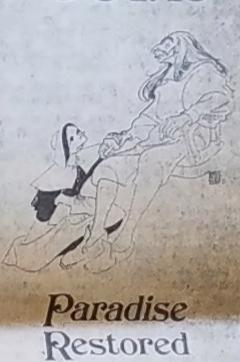
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John Webster's story of a Duchess who marries against her brother's wishes and meets a tragic end. Classic Theatre. Saturdays, 9:00PM.

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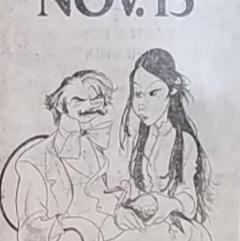
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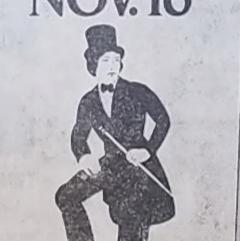
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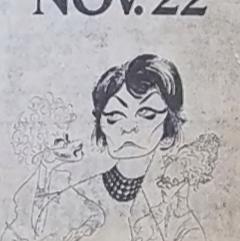
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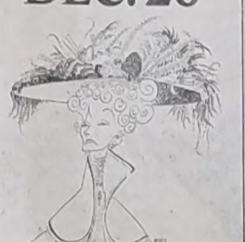
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